close by temples—all these give occasion to some to say that it were better there were no gods, than that there were gods who accept of arid delight in these things—so tyrannical, so impera-tive in, and so easily offended by, trifles/'* But Plutarch is mistaken, when in the same passage he tells us that atheism is on no occasion the cause of superstition; for atheism, by a recoil equally natural, issues in superstition. The wisest men would, with Bacon, rather believe all the fables of the Koran, than be driven to the conclusion that this universe is without a Creator and Governor. When the mind feels that scepticism hath left it nothing to stand on, it will take refuge in the first superstition which offers itself. It thus happens, that while the two may seem to be opposed in their very nature, they yet produce and assist each other; and there are individuals and nations ever vacillating between the two—now betaking themselves to the one, and now to the other, and ever swinging like a pendulum past the point of rest.

None of these can present an acceptable service to God. The pantheist professes to see God in everything, but in reality sees him in nothing. He talks of the communion which he holds with the spirit of the universe, but it is a mere communion with his own thoughts. He believes j ust as little as the atheist in a living deity—in a ruling power, in a moral governor, a holy sovereign, or a righteous judge. Nor can God be pleased with the perverted adoration which superstition offers. Its worship has always been a strange mixture of horror and of levity—of laceration and licentiousness. The very idea entertained of God is an affront offered to him. " What sayest thou ? Is he impious who thinks that there are no gods ?" asks Plutarch; "and he who believes them to be such as the superstitious man describes them, not

much more impious ? For myself, I would rather that men should say regarding me that there was no such person as Plutarch, than that they should say that Plutarch, was a person unsteady, changeable, prone to passion, exacting revenge for inadvertences, offended with trifles."*

When the faith is not a faith in a living God, it will produce no living affection. When no love is supposed to reside in the Divine mind, no love to him will be kindled in our bosoms; and there will be none of that cheerful obedience which proceeds from

* Plutarch on Superstition, 12.